

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 21, 2022

5:00 PM

**2nd Floor Conference Room
City Hall**

Members Present:

John Mitchell, Chair
William Schoefmann, Vice Chair
Mayor George Hansel
Councilor Michael Giacomo
Dawn Thomas-Smith
Lena Kridlo
Kürt Blomquist, Ex-Officio
Greg Kleiner

Staff Present:

Helen Mattson, Executive Assistant

Members Not Present:

Mari Brunner
Dr. Delene White

1) Call to Order

Chair Mitchell called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

2) Roll Call – Appoint Alternates (if required)

Roll call was conducted.

3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting: February 8, 2022

Mayor Hansel made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of February 8, 2022. Councilor Giacomo seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4) Board Business

A) Planning for possible Keene Delegation to Einbeck – 2nd week of October of 2022 – head count of those planning to go

The Mayor stated that Councilor Giacomo spoke to Elizabeth Cardine. Councilor Giacomo replied yes, Ms. Cardine is a teacher and one of the founders of the MC2 Charter School. He continued that it turns out that the Cardine family hosted Einbeck students in the 1990s, so they

already have a connection in that way. He talked with Ms. Cardine about the way Germany's education system works, and she said it sounds like a great fit for MC2 if the PCC is interested in pursuing any further with MC2, and it absolutely aligns with the way MC2 works, being a vocational model and alternative education methods. Exchanges with Einbeck would fit into their curriculum, better than with traditional curriculum. Ms. Cardine was excited about it and wants to talk more about it. Chair Mitchell replied that she can contact him. Councilor Giacomo stated that MC2 might be open to joining the trip in October, if they could talk with schools in Einbeck as part of the exchange. Chair Mitchell replied that is a good idea.

Chair Mitchell stated that he spoke with the Keene High School principal. He continued that she was going to have a meeting and then talk with him again.

Mr. Blomquist stated that he thinks they should put MC2 folks on the list of delegates, if they are interested. Councilor Giacomo replied that MC2's specific interest is in how Germany could potentially have educational models that more closely align with MC2. Mr. Blomquist suggested he get MC2's contact information to Ms. Mattson. Councilor Giacomo agreed.

Mayor Hansel stated that Councilor Mike Remy said he is potentially interested in going on the October trip as well, but they have not had a chance to really get into it. He continued that he mentioned the trip to Dan Smith at the YMCA, but Mr. Smith has been involved in many other things that are taking his attention, so he is not sure. He suspects Mr. Smith will tell him he/the YMCA has too much other stuff going on right now, but he will follow up.

Chair Mitchell asked about other possible connections or opportunities. He continued that per the latest email he received from Jurgen Herbst, the Einbeck people want to know when the Keene delegation is traveling. The Einbeck people want them to arrive on the morning of October 7 and stay until the 15th. It gets a little complicated. In a perfect world, they want the Keene delegation to fly into Berlin, as a group, and the Einbeck hosts would pick them up. They would do the visit in Berlin and then go to Einbeck. Ms. Kridlo stated that there are no direct flights from Boston; there is a layover in Frankfurt. She continued that she recommends taking the train from Frankfurt. Discussion ensued about flights.

Chair Mitchell stated that Einbeck wants them to fly into Berlin together, then be taken to Einbeck, return to Berlin as a group on October 15, and depart from there. He continued that the last time people from Keene went to Einbeck, they each did their own tickets, and managed their own travel from the airport to where they were expected. That is something for the PCC to think about now and make a decision shortly. He does not want to leave Einbeck on the hook for another month, not knowing whether Einbeck hosts will be picking their Keene guests up in Berlin or not. He has to be able to talk to Mr. Herbst in three weeks. He could tell Mr. Herbst "no, thank you," and everyone's travel plans could be independent, or they could try to arrive in Berlin at the same time as a group.

Discussion ensued. Councilor Giacomo stated that part of the issue last time was that some people needed to leave Einbeck earlier than others, so they needed that flexibility. Mr. Blomquist stated that if the PCC is asking people to pay for their own travel tickets, they might not want to dictate how and when to travel, if people need a less expensive time and method to get to Einbeck. Chair Mitchell stated that Mr. Herbst might have proposed to have everyone meet in Berlin as a way of making it easier for the Keene delegation, but if it is not, maybe they should decide right now that everyone will travel on their own. Mayor Hansel stated that it would be fun to visit Berlin first, if they could. Discussion continued. Mr. Blomquist stated that his advice, from previous experience, is to take an overnight flight the day before the festival begins on Friday afternoon, so you have time to sleep. He spoke of how difficult it was for some folks to not arrive in Einbeck until a few hours before the festival started, stay up late that night, and have to get up at 6:00 the next morning.

Chair Mitchell stated that from this discussion it sounds like people want to go on their own. Mr. Blomquist and the Mayor agreed. Councilor Giacomo stated that if some people wanted to do Berlin, it would make it more complicated if the rest of the group wanted to do Frankfurt. He continued that they should probably coordinate where they are flying into, if they want to meet up in the airport or hotel and then coordinate train travel together so their Einbeck hosts are picking up the people from Keene all that the same time instead of having to make multiple trips. Chair Mitchell stated that there is a train to Einbeck now. He continued that it also brings in the complication of buying tickets, holding the tickets, and collecting the money. He asked if anyone wanted to make a motion that they just get there on their own and get home on their own, and he could tell Mr. Herbst that they will all be in Einbeck Friday morning.

Mr. Blomquist made a motion for the PCC to direct Chair Mitchell to tell Jurgen Herbst that people traveling from Keene to Einbeck will be traveling independently, not as a group, and will all be in Einbeck by the morning of Friday, October 7, 2022. Mr. Kleiner seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Councilor Giacomo stated that they should create a framework, at least, telling people to be at a certain place at a certain time. Chair Mitchell replied yes, and he can talk with Mr. Herbst and bring it back to the committee. Discussion continued about sharing travel arrangements/information with one another, and Ms. Mattson stated that yes, last time she asked everyone to give her their schedule and she put it on a spreadsheet and sent it to everyone.

Chair Mitchell stated that they have an updated headcount of who is going to Einbeck, and Ms. Mattson has made a list. Councilor Giacomo asked for a copy of the list and Chair Mitchell gave it to him. Councilor Giacomo stated that he might not be there for the entire trip; he might have to leave early due to not having enough vacation days.

B) Discuss Keene Sentinel's James Rinker, digital community engagement journalist – Media Opportunities to help promote PCC events and exchanges

Ms. Mattson stated that she sent this to everyone. She continued that this is a good opportunity to schedule an outreach, and maybe invite James Rinker to a meeting. Others replied that that is a good idea. Councilor Giacomo stated that Mr. Rinker's position is new, and many organizations are eager to talk with him. They should invite him to a meeting sooner rather than later, because he will be a hot commodity.

Discussion ensued about what to share with Mr. Rinker about the PCC's history and Keene's partnership with Einbeck. The Mayor asked when the partnership started, and Ms. Mattson replied 2000. Ms. Thomas-Smith stated that they had reached out to the Sentinel previously, and had gathered the history and information; she will look through her files. Regarding the number of exchanges Keene has done with Einbeck, committee members determined that it has been at least 20 years, and this year's exchange might be the 25th, because some years have had more than one exchange. Ms. Mattson stated that she has a full list of all the exchanges.

Ms. Mattson stated that she will contact Mr. Rinker and invite him to come to a meeting.

C) Future Exchange Ideas – YMCA, dance, rugby

Councilor Giacomo stated that there is potential with the folks from MC2 Charter School.

Chair Mitchell asked if Sandra Howard should be contacted. He continued that he imagines she still has strong connections with KSC and the Chorale group. Ms. Mattson replied that Dr. White was going to do that for the PCC, but she has moved out of the area. She (Ms. Mattson) has Ms. Howard's email. Chair Mitchell replied that he will contact her.

D) Fundraising Ideas/Opportunities/Taste of Keene

Mr. Kleiner stated that the PCC is slated for a booth at Beer Garden, June 4, with June 5 as the rain date. He continued that he was not a part of it last year on the PCC's side so he does not know how they will get the beer. Discussion ensued about the logistics. Councilor Giacomo stated that Brewtopia should be able to acquire the beer and it is not too complicated.

Chair Mitchell stated that they need a sign-up sheet for who is helping with this event. Ms. Thomas-Smith stated that she can help with planning but cannot be at the event. She continued that last year they used Sign Up Genius. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he can try to find the Sign Up Genius information from last year and set that up, and if needed, he will contact Ms. Thomas-Smith to help. Councilor Giacomo stated that he might be able to help at the event this year.

Discussion ensued about supplies needed for the event. Mr. Schoefmann asked if they want to have a raffle this year. Ms. Mattson replied that they are out of items to raffle. Councilor Giacomo replied that they could maybe get items from Einbeck in October to include in a raffle next summer. Discussion continued.

E) PCC Exchange Survey/Facebook Updates

Ms. Thomas-Smith stated that she still has “upload photos” on her to-do list. She continued that she does not know the status of the surveys. Ms. Mattson replied that Ms. Brunner was working on that. She continued that she thinks they only got four or five responses. Mr. Schoefmann replied that they probably need to do more posts on social media; they cannot post just one time. The Mayor replied yes, they should post regularly, like every Friday. Councilor Giacomo asked if it was a direct email. Mr. Schoefmann no, it was a social media post on Instagram and Facebook. He continued that they could probably distribute it via email. Ms. Mattson replied that she has quite a few email addresses from previous participants, but they are from a long time ago. Councilor Giacomo suggested they reach out to contacts from the groups that have done exchanges and see if they will email the survey to the people in their groups. Ms. Mattson replied that she can look at her contact lists. She continued that it goes back 15 years, but if people do not change their email addresses that often, it might work.

5) Communications

A) Elm City Rotary Club – Donation to Einbeck

Chair Mitchell stated that Ms. Mattson started the process to help the Elm City Rotary Club get in touch with the Einbeck Partnership Committee and facilitate the transfer of about \$7,500 dollars to Einbeck, to help with displaced people coming out of Ukraine. He had a meeting with Yves Gakunde and listened to his goals, and Mr. Gakunde spoke of how the Rotary Club wanted to ensure that the funds did not “disappear into a big pot.” They wanted the funds to have a direct impact on young people. After he (Chair Mitchell) communicated with Mr. Herbst, he communicated with the Mayor [of Einbeck], who said, “We would be able to do a good job. I think this would be most useful if it did not disappear into a big pot,” so the same phrase was used by both parties. The Einbeck Mayor went down the list, saying how they could directly help with education of young people, sports, and recreation. That email was sent to Mr. Gakunde and the Rotary Club, which sealed it for them, and it has just come to pass a few hours ago and officially adopted.

Chair Mitchell stated that what is interesting to him is that this is a great example of how the PCC was able to meet a need that was not expected. He continued that the PCC had the infrastructure already in place, and had the connections, easily able to email the Mayor. The City is very fortunate. He hopes that message can get out that the PCC does more than just travel. There is a genuine, strong connection between Keene and Einbeck, and that is important.

Mr. Blomquist asked if this information can be shared at the next City Council meeting. Ms. Mattson replied that she has the email. Mr. Schoefmann stated that it would be great for the City Manager to share this during her comments at the City Council meeting, and she can highlight Yves Gakunde for his community service and the PCC. Discussion continued. Ms. Mattson stated that she will make sure the City Manager gets a copy of the email/this information.

6) **Reports**
A) **Treasurer Report**

Mr. Kleiner stated that there is no change to the Treasurer Report.

Councilor Giacomo stated that the donation to the PCC from last year's Taste of Keene event was officially accepted by the City Council last week. He continued that the money was already transferred into the account months ago, so this acceptance was just a formality.

Mr. Blomquist made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report. Mr. Schoefmann seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

7) **New Business**
A) **Ability to move the May meeting from 5/10/2022 to 5/17/2022**

Chair Mitchell stated that the May meeting will be May 17, 2022, and hopefully everyone can make that. Ms. Mattson stated that she will move it on the City's calendar.

Chair Mitchell asked if they can have a deadline for people to commit to the October exchange, so Einbeck knows how many people they are hosting. Mr. Blomquist replied yes, Einbeck folks are already getting antsy about the travel plans. He continued that last time, Einbeck wanted to know in February, but the PCC asked for a commitment by May. He thinks by the May meeting the PCC should have a firm count of who is going. They should also determine if there are topic areas that people are interested in. Potentially the MC2 Charter School people are coming. They can give a description of the school and Ms. Cardine's interests, who in Einbeck she might want to meet with, and so on and so forth. Chair Mitchell replied that he is just trying to address the numbers first. He continued that he will let Einbeck know they can expect numbers by May.

Councilor Giacomo asked if Einbeck is looking for a theme, or if the PCC had talked about it. Mr. Blomquist replied that the PCC talked about it, to help Einbeck with planning for what to do. Councilor Giacomo replied that last time the theme was industrial. Mr. Blomquist replied yes, and youth. He continued that the PCC had talked about the theme simply being getting reacquainted, but if there are smaller, sub themes, like the school connection, they can let Einbeck know and conversations can get started. Councilor Giacomo stated that COVID-19 recovery is on everyone's mind. That will be a theme whether they intend for it to be or not. The Mayor stated that he is also interested in the refugees Einbeck is accepting, and diversity and inclusion issues.

- 8) **Next Meeting is April 12, 2022**
9) **More Time**
a) **Student Pen-Pal Ideas – High School 16-18 Year Olds**
10) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 5:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Helen Mattson, Staff Liaison